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RECENT DISCUSSION OF UNIVERSITY QUESTIONS

UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENT (from an article in the *University of California Chronicle*, January, 1920, by Professor O. K. Mc-Murray).

"The members of the European universities still continue to govern the university as they did in its earliest days. One might suppose that America, where the principle of self-government is so firmly established, would repeat the democratic type of the European university. On the contrary, the American university is planned upon the model of a business organization. Its type is fairly uniform whether it be a private or a public foundation. A board of trustees, usually in the case of the privately endowed university, cooptative, in that of the state university, appointive or elective, has in theory the ultimate control over the university's finances and educational policy. In fact, the board is in large part, both as to educational policy and as to that side of financial management which has to do with expenditures, guided by the recommendations of the university president, an officer who closely corresponds with the general manager of the private corporation. Indeed, it is usually the case that the president exercises a greater weight of influence with his board of trustees than does the corresponding officer in the case of a business corporation, for the latter is under the constant obligation of proving his successful operation by referring to the barometer of profits. Furthermore, the corporation director is himself a business man who understands the aims, purposes and limitations of business life; the trustee of the university is rarely, if ever, chosen on the basis of his familiarity with educational problems or of his scientific or scholarly attainments. The consequence is that the board of trustees of the university perforce lean upon the opinions and recommendations of their appointed manager, himself usually a man of ability and vision, with excellent equipment in the larger problems of higher education, to an extent greater than do the directors of a great railroad or bank or manufactur-

ing company upon the recommendation of their chief managing official.

"This is not to say, however, that the influence of the trustees is negligible in the control of the university. In part, by reason of that peculiar process of 'unconscious imitation,' which Bagehot pointed out as the basis of phenomena so different as a 'Saturday Review style' and 'national character,' the president comes to anticipate the desires and aims of the trustees to as great an extent as he moulds and shapes them. In part, the influence of the board, mild though it may be, operates institutionally rather than psychologically to bring about the same result. Faculties and student body reflect, especially in some of our older universities, the character of the boards of trustees. It is very easy to trace the process in which a certain type develops and perpetuates itself and is expressed in the attitude of faculties and students. For example, consider the case of a cooptative board chartered in colonial times ostensibly and secondarily for the purpose of fostering learning, but really and primarily for that of educating clergymen belonging to a particular sect. As President Eliot has pointed out, the natural tendency of such a self-perpetuating board is to select men of their own day and generation and of their own mode of thought to fill the vacancies occurring among their number. Such boards, therefore, nearly always consist of men past middle life, intensifying similarities of type rather than differences. . . . How this affects scientific progress may be studied in the attitude of some of our great colleges towards the biological sciences a little more than a generation since, or may even now occasionally be observed in their reaction toward such new learning as the sciences of sociology and social psychology. In philosophy, literature, history, economics, and political science, the effects of such an organization are even more clearly apparent. The trustees feel themselves peculiarly bound to keep the university safe from dangerous speculation in these fields; the president, whatever his individual prepossessions may be respecting academic freedom, must in the long run carry out the fundamental policies of the board. The result is that the teacher or investigator, confined by the limitations unconsciously imposed by his environment, becomes in a measure timid and stereotyped. His imagination binds itself in academic harness. His Pegasus is tamed to become a plough-horse. . . .

"But the story is not half told with an exposition of the general manner in which the government of the universities from without has chilled the ardor of the searcher after truth. Where the analogy of business organization is pursued through the internal structure of the university, the absurdity of attempting to organize what should be the intellectual leadership of the nation upon the basis on which a department store is planned becomes more apparent. Heads of departments, appointed by the president and the trustees, or by either, frequently exercise a control over the members of their departments absolutely untempered by constitutional authority. Promotions, increase of salary, removals, oft-times depend upon the whims or humors of a single individual. To be sure the president, and the trustees, too, have a control over all such matters, and may set aside or revise the recommendations of a department head, but manifestly the president is, in the general interests of orderly administration, obliged to support constituted authority, and details can scarcely be gone into by a board of trustees. That extreme abuses are not more frequent under such a plan is a testimonial to the inherent excellence of average human nature—that inherent excellence that made slavery and autocratic government endurable for so many centuries and that affords the best foundation for the enduring quality of democratic institutions. But though scandals are less frequent under this sort of organization than might be supposed, it places too great a demand upon the sense of justice of one man and subjects the other to an unworthy reliance upon another's favor. Besides, the recognition and reward of merit in a subordinate depends not only on the good will of the department head but upon his talent of persuasion or persistency with which he presents his demands, possibly to some extent upon the favor with which he and his work are regarded by the president. In a business corporation there is a constant check upon the tyranny, mistakes, or personal vagaries of department heads through the evidence supplied by profits or production; the university executive has no such means to correct the errors of the heads of his departments. The principle of responsibility for the acts and omissions of subordinates cannot be applied; the legal concepts of agency, of master and servant, do not fit the conditions of the intellectual world.

"The multiplication of deans, department heads, and adminis-

trative officials has led to the introduction of false standards of value. Administrative work, from being regarded as a necessary task to be undertaken by the teacher as a duty, even though with reluctance, has increasingly come to be looked upon as a desirable end in itself. Young men look forward to the possibility of some day attaining an administrative position rather than to a life spent in study and teaching. The financial rewards and honors of the profession lie in that direction. Men of talent and learning accordingly immerse themselves in the petty details, which are, under the existing systems, the chief materials of internal university administration, and spend hours that would better be devoted to the discovery of truth, in discussing the number of units of French or algebra required for the A.B. degree, or in determining whether John Doe of the senior class should be permitted to substitute Sanskrit for Zoölogy as a preparation for his career as an automobile salesman.

“One might trace the effects of the mistaken application of the principle of business organization to the university in other respects—how it tends to alter the president’s position from that of an intellectual leader and initiator of educational policies to that of a business manager, how it involves the introduction into the life of the university of the spirit of salesmanship and advertising, how it encourages the application of the methods of mass production in teaching, how it is in part responsible for the great respect paid to mere numbers and income. But enough has been said to indicate the need of introducing into the government of universities some infusion of self-government, of returning as far as possible to the original notion of the university as a guild of scholars pursuing self-determined ends. The university, like every other organism, must grow from within. We have sought to impose the law of its growth from without.

“The principle of demanding a voice in every major determination of university policy may to some seem unreasonable. Boards of trustees may reply: ‘We permit you to govern your own affairs, those concerning education; you have opportunity and leisure for study and research; we desire you to be as comfortable and free from molestation as possible; why do you desire to be heard on financial questions, about which, Heaven knows, you must certainly be inexpert, judging from your present situation?’ The answer is that a determination taken on a real question of educa-

tional policy probably involves expense, and one taken upon such a question as whether the university will build dormitories or will use some of the money required for that purpose to pay better salaries, or to call a new professor, directly touches educational policies. It is not that the professor can advise sanely as to financial policy, but that he has first-hand knowledge of the wants of the university, and should have a direct opportunity of expressing them through his own representatives; and it is eminently desirable that he, too, should know something of the practical difficulties that confront the board. No important resolution should be adopted concerning the university's future welfare, save after matured consideration of all interests involved; and in enumerating these interests, the alumni, at least, as representing matured student opinion, should not be omitted.

"The immediate program for the introduction of a measure of self-determination in university affairs involves certain other fundamental demands besides that for an opportunity of expression of their opinions by members of the faculty before the managing board. A very essential and important feature is the establishment of a system of participation by the faculty in appointments, promotions and removals. Promotions should be made as far as possible upon fixed principles, and in the case of removals, other than by the automatic operation of preestablished rules, upon a procedure analogous to that existing in courts of law. While the principle of prescription may well be applied in the case of members of the faculty who have long and faithfully served, there should be an automatic elimination of the unfit by the application of a rule requiring promotion at certain intervals, or in the event of failure to secure such promotion, barring certain accidents, removal from the faculty. Deans, department heads, and committees should be elected by the faculty—at least, the elective principle should be an element in their selection. The ultimate ideal in the plan of reform ought to be the establishment of the principles of responsibility and of solidarity. Every member of the university should have the right and the duty of expressing his views upon all questions of university policy, not alone upon those affecting his immediate department, but also upon those affecting the entire welfare."